THE STORY OF OSIRIS AND ISIS

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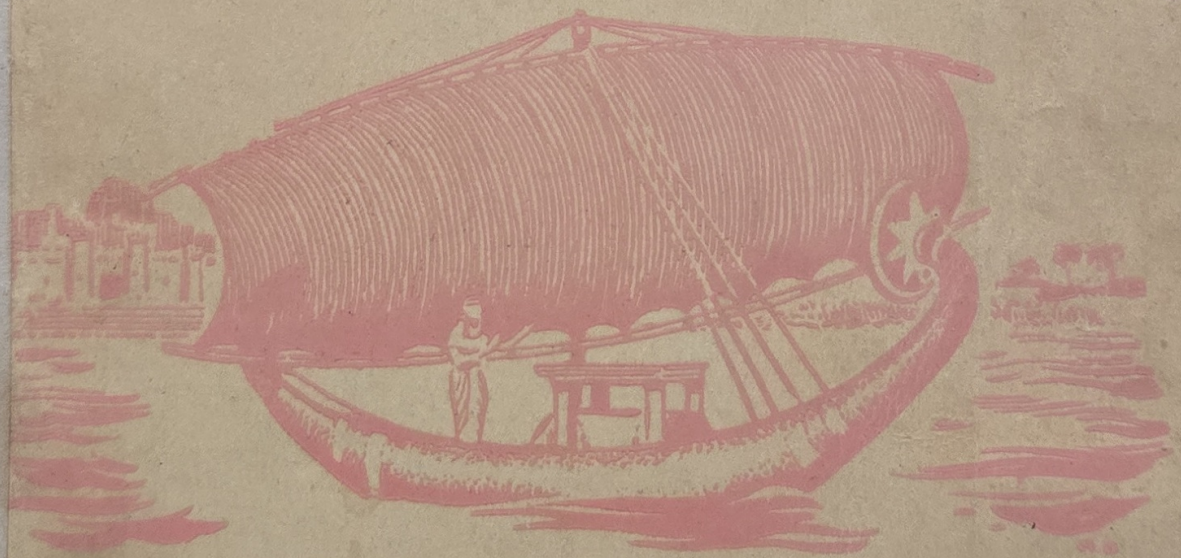

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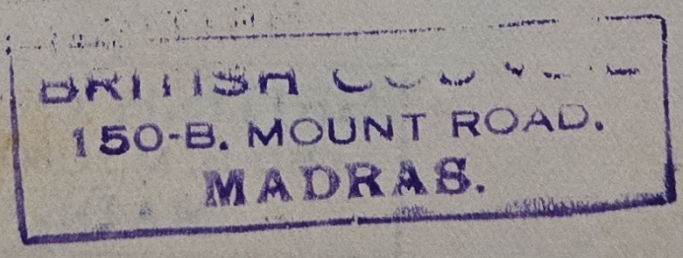

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PREFACE

The charming story of the ancient Egyptian deities, Osiris and his sister-wife, Isis, is here retold in very simple English, for the benefit of students in the junior forms of schools where English is taught as a foreign language.

The book is written within a carefully selected vocabulary of 750 words, and all difficult sentence structures have been avoided.

E.F.D.

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THE BIRTH OF OSIRIS

LONG, long ago in the land of Egypt the people did not believe in a true or living God. They only had statues of wood and stone, and they prayed to these. There was much poverty and suffering in the country, and great unhappiness, for the people did not know where to turn for help. At this time a young man called Pamyles lived in an Egyptian village. He was very poor. Often he had no food for his wife and children. His father was old and sick, too, and this filled Pamyles with sorrow. He did not know how to help his father or his own young family.

One day Pamyles walked down a road to the river. His wife wanted some water for cooking, and he carried a water-pot on his head. He passed a stone statue outside a temple, and he heard a voice. The voice said, 'Pamyles!' Pamyles was afraid. There was no one in sight. Was the stone statue speaking to him? He forgot all about his poor wife's cooking. In his surprise he dropped his water-pot and turned to run away. But the voice said, 'Do not be afraid, Pamyles. Go back to your village and say, "Osiris, the lord of all the earth, is born." Tell the news to everyone.'

Pamyles ran home. He told his wife, but she did not believe him. 'You have drunk too much wine,' she said.

'I have drunk no wine,' said Pamyles angrily. 'Where is the money to buy wine?'

'Then you have been too long in the hot sun,' said his wife. 'And where is my water-pot? I want water for cooking, and you bring me this unlikely tale! Go and bring the water-pot, you foolish man!'

But Pamyles's old father heard his story. 'The voice in the temple was a voice from heaven,' the old man said. 'Tell the news everywhere, my son. Tell all the people of Egypt, "Osiris, lord of all the earth, is born."' That night the old man died, peaceful and happy.

And Pamyles went through all the land of Egypt. 'Osiris, lord of all the earth, is born!' he said to everyone. They listened and were glad.

In this way the news of the birth of Osiris came to the world.

THE COMING OF THE GOD AND GODDESS TO THEBES

A MAN and woman stood outside a temple near the town of Thebes in Egypt. The man was big and tall and beautiful. The woman was also very beautiful. Her skin was fair and her hair was

golden. The old temple priest saw them. 'These are not ordinary people,' he said. 'Surely they are a god and goddess!' He knelt before them and asked them to live with him in the temple.

'Thank you,' said the tall young man. 'I am Osiris, and this is my wife, Isis.'

The priest had heard Pamyles's words, many years before. Now he was filled with joy. Here was Osiris, lord of all the earth! 'Perhaps he will help all the poor people of Thebes,' the priest said to himself.

Osiris and Isis lived with the priest for many months. Each day Osiris went into Thebes to visit the poor people. He helped them in their work, and he told them about the living God. 'There is a great God in heaven,' Osiris said. 'He watches us and cares for us. Pray to him and he will help you.'

Isis also visited the poor people, and they all loved her. She helped the sick, and often made them better. Sometimes she was not able to cure them, but she gave them comfort in their pain. One day a little boy was badly hurt by a great tree trunk. The tree had fallen on him. He was in great pain. Isis took him in her arms and comforted him. His pain went away, but all his bones were broken and he was dying. 'Mother,' he cried, 'the beautiful lady says I am going to a far country. I shall feel no more pain.'

Each day Osiris and Isis went into Thebes.

That night he died peacefully, with no more pain. His unhappy mother understood, and was comforted.

Soon people knew that Osiris and his lovely wife were gods. The king of Egypt heard about them. He sent for Osiris and questioned him. 'Who are you?' he said.

'I am a traveller from the land of Aalu,' said Osiris.

'Where is this land?'

'It is far away to the west. No man is able to travel so far.'

'Then you will never return there?'

'Not in this life. I shall start the journey, but I shall not get there.'

The king asked Osiris to come and live at the palace. 'I cannot leave the old priest,' Osiris answered. 'I will come to the palace every day, but I shall also help the poor people in the town.'

And so Osiris went to the palace every day. There was a young man at the palace, called Hotep. Osiris and Hotep soon became great friends. Hotep was a captain in the king's army, and he was good and brave.

One day the king was very angry. Hotep's enemies told the king many false stories about the young captain. They said, 'Hotep is planning to kill you. He wants to become king in your place.' This was untrue, but the king believed it. He gave orders for Hotep to be killed. He would not listen to the young captain. 'Take Hotep away and cut off his head!' the king said angrily. And then Osiris stood before the king.

'This is not right!' he said. 'Hotep is innocent. He shall not be killed!'

The king shouted, 'The king is always right. Who are you, to speak to me like this?' He lifted

his whip to hit Osiris. But he was not able to do so. By the god's magic force, the king stood there, unable to move.

'Hotep is innocent,' Osiris said again. 'Set him free.'

And the king told his soldiers to set the young captain free. Hotep was forgiven.

THE COMING OF THE EVIL BROTHER

A FEW years later the king died, and the people asked Osiris and Isis to be king and queen. At first Osiris said No, but the people asked him again and again. And so at last Osiris and Isis became king and queen of Egypt. They ruled for many years. Often Osiris travelled to distant corners of his kingdom. In his absence, Isis ruled with great wisdom.

One day a tall, dark-skinned man came to the gates of Thebes. He was very ugly. He had many soldiers with him, and they were all fierce and ugly, too. This dark ugly man said to the guard at the gate, 'I am Typhon, brother of Osiris. Go and tell him I am here.'

The guard did not believe him, but he went and told Osiris. He was very surprised when Osiris said, 'Bring him here.' Osiris was not pleased, but he welcomed his brother and gave him a fine palace to live in.

There was no more peace and happiness in Thebes. Typhon and his soldiers fought and quarrelled, and made trouble everywhere. Many people said, 'Typhon is a dangerous man. He is planning to kill our king, Osiris.' Others said, 'Surely he will not kill his own brother?' And everywhere there was doubt and discontent.

THE MURDER OF OSIRIS

Osiris was always kind and polite to his brother, but he did not trust him. And Isis hated Typhon. Somehow she knew that, some day, Typhon would do Osiris great harm. The gentle Isis was filled with fear every time Typhon came near the king, her beloved husband.

One day Typhon came to see Osiris. He had a piece of silk cloth in his hands. It was a most beautiful piece of cloth. No one in Egypt had ever seen any cloth like it. It was as soft and bright and gay as a rainbow. Typhon said to Osiris, 'I want to give you this cloth. I know a very good tailor. Let me measure you, and I will have the cloth made into a cloak for you.'

Isis was afraid. She said to Osiris, 'This is a trick. Please do not take the cloth.' But Osiris answered, 'I do not want to be rude to my brother. This is just a friendly gift. It can do

me no harm.' And he said to Typhon, 'Thank you very much, my brother. Will you measure me?'

Typhon measured Osiris in a very strange way. He did not measure him from his shoulders to his ankles. He measured him from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet. 'What are you doing, Typhon?' asked Osiris. 'The cloak will not cover my head and my feet!'

Then Typhon laughed and said, 'How foolish I am!' and he measured the king from his shoulders to his ankles. But he also wrote down the other measurements.

The next day Typhon set off with some of his soldiers. He said, 'I am going to find the tailor.' But he was away for several days, and he went a very long way. After he had seen the tailor, he went secretly to the house of another man. He gave this man the first measurements of Osiris. Then he went to the country of Ethiopia. The dark-skinned Queen of Ethiopia was the enemy of Egypt. She and Typhon planned to kill Osiris and to capture Isis. 'Then you and I will be king and queen of Egypt and Ethiopia,' she said to Typhon.

Typhon went back to Thebes. He took with him the cloak, and a strange long box. This box was hidden under leaves and grass, and no one knew what it was. Next morning he went to the

palace and gave the cloak to Osiris. The king was very pleased.

'I am glad you like it,' said Typhon. 'And now will you come to my house tonight? I am having a feast.'

Osiris did not want to go to Typhon's house. He did not trust his brother. But he did not like to say No. 'Thank you, brother, I will come,' he answered.

Poor Isis was sorrowful and afraid. 'He is planning some terrible thing,' she said to Osiris. 'Dear husband, I beg you not to go to his house tonight.'

'I have promised,' Osiris said. 'No harm will come to me.'

'I am sure some terrible harm will come to you,' said Isis, and she wept bitterly as the king left the palace.

At Typhon's house there was great feasting and drinking. Afterwards Typhon brought out the strange long box. He uncovered it, and everyone cried out, 'Oh, what a beautiful box!' It was made of gold and silver, and carved with crowns and lotus leaves. The whole lid was set with precious stones—emeralds, sapphires, and rubies.

'I will give this box to the man whom it fits perfectly,' said Typhon with a twisted smile. Each person stepped into the box in turn and lay down. The box was much too big for them all. At last Typhon said to Osiris, 'You are bigger and taller

Typhon said to Osiris : ' See if the box fits you.'

than anyone else, my brother. See if the box fits you.'

With a laugh the great Osiris stepped into the box. ' Lie down!' cried Typhon. His eyes were bright with hatred. Osiris lay down. The box fitted him perfectly. Indeed, it had been made to his measurements. As soon as the king lay down,

Typhon closed the lid and fastened the locks. Nails were hammered into the top. Then with a great shout Typhon and his men carried the box down to the river and threw it into the fast-running water.

Isis, asleep in the palace, woke suddenly. She thought she saw Osiris standing before her. His face and hands were covered with blood. She jumped off her bed and ran to him, but he disappeared. It was only a dream. But still she was troubled. She went to the window and looked towards Typhon's palace. She thought she saw a long box in the river. Great flames of fire seemed to shine all round it. And far away, she saw Typhon and his soldiers in a boat. Filled with fear because of the fire, they were leaving Thebes as quickly as they were able.

All night long Isis watched and waited. But Osiris did not return. He was dead, killed by a wicked brother.

And Typhon would return, Isis knew, to make himself king of Egypt.

THE SEARCH OF ISIS

Isis and the faithful Hotep, captain of the king's army, waited for Typhon's return. He came back, ten days later, bringing the great army of Ethiopia with him. He said to Isis, ' I will share the throne with you. If you will marry me, you shall be free.'

'I will never marry my husband's murderer!' Isis cried proudly.

'Then you and all your people will be killed,' shouted the angry Typhon, and the battle against Thebes began.

It lasted for seven days. The Egyptians fought bravely, but their army was a small one. They could not hope to win a fight against the huge Ethiopian army. On the seventh day Typhon and the dark-skinned Ethiopians broke into Thebes. They killed all the men, women and children in the streets and houses. Then Typhon entered the palace.

But as the Evil One opened the door of Isis's room, a beautiful white bird flew out. It was Isis. She had changed herself into a bird, in order to escape Typhon. With a sweet, unhappy cry the bird flew three times round the palace and then down the river. Isis's search for Osiris had begun.

THE SATYRS

Isis did not know where to start her search. She flew on and on, down the river. Sometimes she changed herself into a woman again, and asked people for news and help. For some days she learnt nothing. Then one day new hope was born. She saw a woman by the river. The woman told her that, early one morning, her husband had seen

some satyrs in the valley. Satyrs were strange creatures, half man and half goat. Their leader was the goat-god, Pan. The woman said that Pan told her husband he had seen a pale light moving down the river. In the middle of the light there was a long box. Pan said, 'The body of your king is in that box. It is going downstream. Remember!'

The woman said to Isis, 'But surely this is not true? The king is in Thebes.'

Isis shook her head sadly. 'No,' she answered. 'The king is not in Thebes. He has been murdered. That was indeed his body in the box, and I am searching for it. I am Isis, his wife and queen.'

The woman wept and kissed the hem of the queen's dress, and said, 'May heaven guide you in your search!'

Isis went on her way, following the river. After a time, the river divided into two streams. Isis did not know which way to go. She saw some children playing, and she came down and joined them. One little boy sat by himself, crying bitterly. 'Why are you crying?' Isis asked him, for she hated children to be sad. 'What is the matter, little boy?'

The child looked up at the lovely lady, and he smiled through his tears. Somehow he did not feel unhappy now. He told her his story. 'Yes-

terday I saw a beautiful box in the river,' he said. 'I wanted it so much. I ran to my house and asked my father to get it for me. But when we came back, the box had gone.'

'Which way did it go?' Isis asked.

'That way,' answered the little boy, pointing to the left stream.

'That way', answered the little boy, pointing to the left stream.

Isis thanked him. 'You shall have a little box just like the big one,' she promised him. 'Come down to that tree early tomorrow morning.' She pointed to a tree bending across the river. The little boy turned to look at it, and then he turned again to look at the lovely lady, but she had gone. All he saw was a beautiful white bird, flying down the river to the left.

Early the next morning he came down to the river. He looked under the tree, and he found the little box, just as Isis had promised. Joyfully he took it home with him, and kept it always. And he never forgot the lovely lady beside the river.

THE GOAT-GOD PAN

Isis, the White Bird, flew on and on. At last she came to the mouth of the river. She searched everywhere. Unhappy and heart-broken, she feared the box had been carried out to sea. 'I shall never find it now,' she thought sadly.

Then she heard laughter and music, and found the goat-god Pan. He was playing music on his pipes, and a dozen laughing children danced round him. Isis asked Pan about the box.

'Yes, I have seen it,' he answered, 'but now it has gone.'

'Gone!' cried Isis. 'Gone for ever? Shall I never see it again?'

'Don't lose heart,' said Pan. 'Listen to what the fairies say.'

Isis heard soft voices singing. They told how the box was carried far across the sea. At last the waves threw it ashore at Byblos, into the branches of a tamarisk tree.

'Shall I find it there?' Isis asked.

Pan thanked her and was satisfied.

'No—no—no!' sang the fairies.

'Alas, where shall I find it? Have pity on me!' cried the unhappy queen.

'The tamarisk tree grew with magical speed,' Pan explained, 'and enfolded the box in its trunk. King Melecander of Byblos saw the wonderful pattern it made in the wood. "Cut down the tree and carry it to my new palace," he said. "It shall be the centre pillar of my throne-room." You will find it there, Queen Isis. The box is still inside the trunk.'

Isis thanked him. 'You have helped me greatly, dear Pan,' she said. 'What shall I give you in return?'

Pan said, 'Will you make me beautiful? I am so ugly, with my goat's feet and horns.'

Isis answered, 'I cannot change you, Pan. But in future no one will think you are ugly. You will always be remembered for your beautiful music. People will say, "Listen to the pipes of Pan. Isn't he a wonderful god?" '

Pan thanked her and was satisfied.

THE SECRET OF THE TREE

After a long and tiring flight across the sea, Isis reached the palace of King Melecander. Here she changed into a woman again, and wandered through the royal gardens. She met a young girl,

maid-in-waiting to Queen Astarte, and the girl spoke to her. 'I am Melita,' she said. 'Who are you?'

Isis gave a strange answer. 'I am the Nurse of my people,' she said.

Puzzled, Melita went on, 'Do you live here?' and Isis replied, 'When the tree gives up the god who lies at its heart, then I shall go.'

All this time, Isis was plaiting and tying Melita's hair. Suddenly a bell rang and Melita ran off to the queen. Astarte asked her where she had been, and Melita told her about the stranger.

'She says she is the nurse of her people,' the young girl said. 'Perhaps she will cure the little prince?'

The queen shook her head. 'How can a mere nurse-woman cure him?' she said sadly. 'The child has been sick for many months, and all the king's doctors have failed to make him better.'

And then the queen noticed Melita's plaited hair. It was scented with rare flowers, unknown in Byblos. 'Who *is* this nurse-woman?' Astarte asked slowly.

Melita said once more, 'She says she is the nurse of her people. She also said: "When the tree gives up the god at its heart, I shall go." What does she mean, O Queen?'

Astarte was puzzled and thoughtful. At last she said, 'Bring her here.'

Melita ran into the gardens and called the stranger. On their way to the queen, they passed through the throne-room. Isis saw the great wooden pillar supporting the roof. On this pillar was the same pattern of lotus leaves and crowns as those on Osiris's box. The pattern seemed a natural growth of the tree. For a long moment Isis stood quite still, praying for her loved one. Then she followed Melita into Astarte's room.

Queen Astarte saw at once that Isis was both godlike and beautiful. She asked Isis gently if she were able to cure her baby son. 'He is suffering from a strange disease,' Astarte said. 'No doctor knows what is the matter with him.'

'Bring him here, and I will try,' Isis said.

The baby was brought to her. Isis took him in her arms. Gently she touched his head and lips, and ran her hand over his body. Then she smiled at him. 'He will live,' she said, putting him into his mother's arms.

Three days later the baby boy was laughing and full of life. Isis was made his night-nurse. Every night she slept in the same room with him, and every morning the baby seemed fatter and stronger. King Melecander and Queen Astarte were filled with happiness.

But the day-nurses were jealous. They told strange stories about the night-nursery. They said they saw flames and lightning through the windows.

They heard the baby prince laughing and shouting in the middle of the night. And the guard in the throne-room spoke of a strange white bird that flew out of the nursery window each night. It entered the throne-room. It flew round and round the great pillar, with unhappy cries. Then it went back to the night-nursery.

All this talk worried the queen, and at last she decided to hide in a cupboard in the night-nursery. Isis and the baby went to bed, and for some hours nothing happened. Then suddenly the whole room was filled with light. The queen looked out of her hiding-place. Isis stood in the middle of the room. Her long golden hair seemed to be on fire. Fire poured from her finger tips, and her eyes shone like stars. She held the baby in her arms, and sang a strange song in an unknown language. The baby shouted and laughed with pleasure.

The queen cried out in horror and ran out of the cupboard. At once the flames died down, and Isis stood in the middle of the dark room, with the baby in her arms. The magic spell was broken.

Isis spoke sadly to Astarte. 'I was making your son immortal,' she said. 'Tonight I hoped to finish the spell. But you have broken it for ever. You did not trust me, and your son has lost his chance of immortality. Now, old age and death will come to him as it comes to all other mortals.'

Isis stood in the middle of the room.

'Who are you?' whispered Astarte. In front of her terrified eyes Isis slowly grew taller and taller. Her golden hair changed to wings of shining red and gold and blue. Astarte knew then that she was a goddess. With a great cry of grief and fear the queen took her child in her arms and ran from the room.

THE next morning Isis sat alone in her room, watching the sun rise over the sea. 'The king will surely send for me soon,' she thought. 'I am very near the end of my search.' She waited patiently, thinking happily of the future.

King Melecander did not send for her, however. He came to visit her in her own room. In this way he showed her great honour, knowing she was a goddess. 'The queen is sick and frightened,' he said to Isis, 'but she is very grateful to you. She thanks you for looking after the prince, our son. I, too, am very grateful. I know you are leaving us today. Is there anything I can give you to repay your kindness?'

'Melecander,' answered Isis, 'I thank you. Your queen will soon be well and happy again, and your son will become famous through all Byblos. And you are right. Today I am leaving you, and I ask you for one thing only.'

'Ask, and it shall be yours,' replied the king.

'Give me the wooden pillar in the centre of your throne-room,' Isis said.

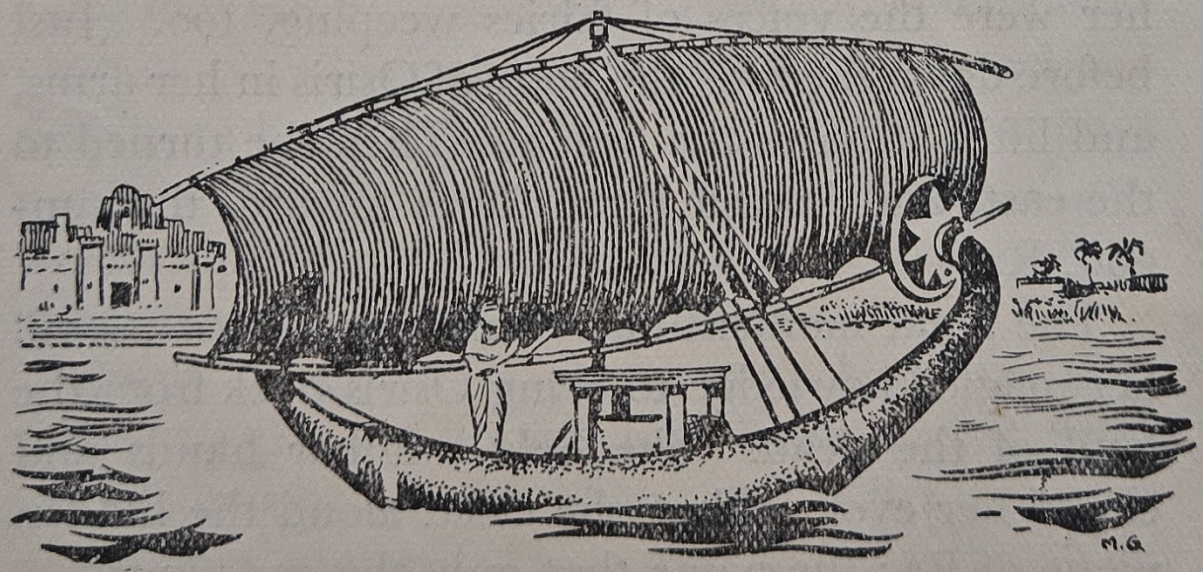
Melecander was surprised. This seemed a strange thing to ask. But he did not hesitate. The pillar had cost him a great deal of money, but Isis must have it. He had promised. 'It shall be taken down at once,' he said.

All that day the king's workmen worked in the throne-room. The next morning the pillar was taken down, and Isis came to see it. She took a long knife and cut four lines down the trunk. The outer part fell away. There, in the heart of the tree, lay the box of Typhon.

For a moment Isis stood absolutely still, her hands pressed to her heart. Her eyes filled with tears, and she knelt and prayed beside the body of her husband. Then she took a white cloth and covered the box. Twelve of the king's servants carried it down to the river and put it in a boat. The boat was painted gold and had a sail of black silk.

Isis said goodbye to King Melecander and his wife and son. She kissed the little prince gently, and said to the queen, ' I loved him, too.'

Then she stepped into the boat and stood beside



Guided by unseen hands, the boat sailed slowly down the river.

the box. Guided by unseen hands, the boat sailed slowly down the river.

Isis's search for Osiris had ended.

THE AWAKENING OF OSIRIS

The boat sailed slowly down the dark stream. Isis stood unmoving, her eyes on the gold and jewelled box. At sunset the boat came to an open sandy beach, and here Isis looked up for the first time. Gently she guided the ship to the bank and sat waiting for the darkness.

At last the sun set below the far horizon. Isis took a knife and cut round the lid of the box. One after another the locks broke, and the heavy lid swung back. At last she looked down on the beloved face and form of Osiris, and her eyes filled with tears. All night long she wept, and all around her were the voices of fairies weeping, too. Just before dawn she took the body of Osiris in her arms, and lifted it on to the beach. Then she turned to the east, and bowed three times towards the sun-god, Ra.

The great moment had come. Isis must use all her magic knowledge to bring Osiris back from the land of the dead. She held out her hands and closed her eyes. Then she cried aloud the hidden name of Ra: the name that only the gods knew.

There was a great flash of light followed by a

crash of thunder. Then there was silence everywhere. Black darkness covered the world.

Slowly the fingers of the sun-god spread across the sky from the east. The light of the sun's rays showed two figures on the sand. Osiris and Isis, gently breathing, lay side by side, asleep. Love had won the great victory over the Evil One.

THE SECOND MURDER OF OSIRIS

The next few years were years of great joy for Osiris and Isis. They were no longer King and Queen of Egypt, but they lived together in peace and happiness. They had a little house of mud and branches. Osiris fished in the river and hunted in the forest for their food. Isis grew wheat and vegetables, and kept a little flock of goats for milk. They had everything they needed. And then their baby son, Horus, was born. Isis's cup of happiness was full. And yet, she and Osiris sometimes wished they were back in Thebes. They knew their poor people suffered greatly under Typhon's rule. They were whipped and starved and overworked. Everyone feared and hated the Evil One.

Horus grew into a strong and beautiful boy. Osiris taught him to fish and hunt, and to fight with club and spear. 'Now you will be able to guard your mother!' Osiris said to his son. 'You can save her from danger when I am away.'

Osiris went hunting for longer distances. Sometimes he was away for several days. At these times Isis watched and waited anxiously. She was always afraid that Typhon would find Osiris again. Each time Osiris returned, calling to her from the distance, she ran to meet him with tears of joy in her eyes.

But one day Osiris did not return. Isis watched and waited in vain. Hours passed by, and Isis sat alone by the river. Horus came and begged her to come home. 'Please come and eat,' he said, but Isis shook her head.

'I can neither sleep nor eat,' she said, 'until your father returns.'

Osiris did not return. On the fourth evening a black boat came down the river. It stopped close to Isis, and a dark, ugly figure got out. Isis drew back with a cry. It was Typhon, the Evil One.

'Did I frighten you, fair sister?' said Typhon with a cruel laugh. Isis suddenly knew why Osiris had not come back. Typhon had killed him. And now the Evil One had come to find her and Horus, and perhaps kill them, too.

'You do not seem pleased to see me,' Typhon went on. 'And that is a pity. I want to be your friend.'

Isis looked at him with bitter hatred. 'You have killed Osiris!' was all she said.

'Yes, I killed him!' answered Typhon. 'And

It was Typhon, the Evil One.

this time you will not win him back. Not even all your magic spells can find him. After I killed him, I cut his body into many pieces. The parts are scattered through all Egypt. You will never find him again!' The Evil One laughed his evil laugh once more.

But Isis was not afraid. She looked at him with

angry scorn and said, 'Coward and traitor! I am not afraid of you. One day you will meet the punishment you deserve.' She turned to go, but Typhon shouted, 'You shall come with me. For many years I have wanted you. Now I shall take you back with me to Egypt.' He put out his hand and touched her arm.

'Do not touch me!' Isis said. Her voice was low, but very angry, and Typhon was afraid. 'Do not dare to touch me!' she said again, and turned away and left him.

He let her go, and she and Horus spent the night alone in their little hut.

THE ESCAPE OF ISIS

Isis knew, however, that she was powerless against the Evil One. The next morning Typhon came, with fifty of his soldiers, and seized her and her son. They tied their hands together, and threw them into a boat.

All day the men rowed the boat upstream, and that evening they came to a dark and lonely castle. 'You will stay here until you promise to marry me,' Typhon said, and laughed when Isis replied, 'I will never marry you!'

The gates were shut and locked, and Horus and Isis found themselves alone in the cold, damp, silent

castle. Two servants looked after them, but never spoke.

'It is like the temple of the dead!' thought Isis, with a shiver. 'How shall we ever get out again?' And she wept for her lost happiness and her dear love.

Isis and Horus were shut up in their prison for many days, and there seemed no hope of escape. Every day Isis prayed to the sun-god, Ra, but her prayers were unanswered. Typhon's magic power seemed too strong. Even Ra was not able to save her.

And then, one evening a tall, kind-faced stranger suddenly appeared. Isis was playing with Horus, and she put her arms around her son and pushed him behind her.

'What do you want?' she said coldly, thinking this man was Typhon's servant.

'Do not be afraid, Isis,' answered the stranger. 'I have come to help you. I am Thoth. Ra has sent me to help you to escape.'

Thoth was the wisest of all the gods. He held the keys of knowledge and was all-powerful. Isis believed and trusted him at once. She took Horus by the hand, and together they followed Thoth. He led them through gates and doors which opened to his touch, and down long passages and paths. At last they came to an open field.

'I shall leave you here,' Thoth said. 'The ser-

vants of the mighty Ra will take care of you. Follow them until you come to a certain city. There you must rest until the time comes to rescue Osiris.'

Thoth disappeared, and the two were left alone. Isis looked round for Ra's servants. Where were they? Should she wait here until they came? She did not know what to do. Then suddenly she heard a small voice. 'When the lady Isis is ready, we will go,' it said.

Isis looked down, and saw a huge scorpion, then

Isis counted seven scorpions.

another, and another. She counted seven. Were these the servants of Ra?

'Who are you?' she asked.

'I am Tefen,' said the biggest scorpion. 'I have come to guard the lady Isis and her son Horus.'

'I am Befen,' said the next scorpion. 'I shall go with my brother Tefen, to follow behind.'

'I am Mestet,' said the third. 'I shall walk on the right side of the lady Isis.'

'I am Mestetef,' said the fourth, 'and I will keep guard on her left.'

'We are Petet, Thetet, and Maatet,' said the other three. 'We will guide the lady Isis to the city of Teb.'

And so they set off together. They travelled for many days. The sun was hot overhead, and the sand was hot under their feet. Isis and Horus were tired and thirsty, and sometimes they thought they were lost in the desert. But the scorpions never hesitated, and at last they came to the city of Teb. The scorpions told Isis that she must stay here for some time. It was Ra's wish.

THE UNKINDNESS OF THE OVERLORD'S WIFE

Isis went to the overlord's house in Teb, to ask him where she could live. The overlord's wife opened the door, and when she saw the seven

scorpions she was very angry. 'Go away, woman!' she shouted. 'I don't want a lot of dangerous scorpions in my house.'

'I am tired and hungry,' Isis said quietly, 'and my little boy needs rest. Is there no house in the city where we can live?'

'Certainly not!' said the overlord's wife. 'Go away from Teb at once. We want no scorpions here.'

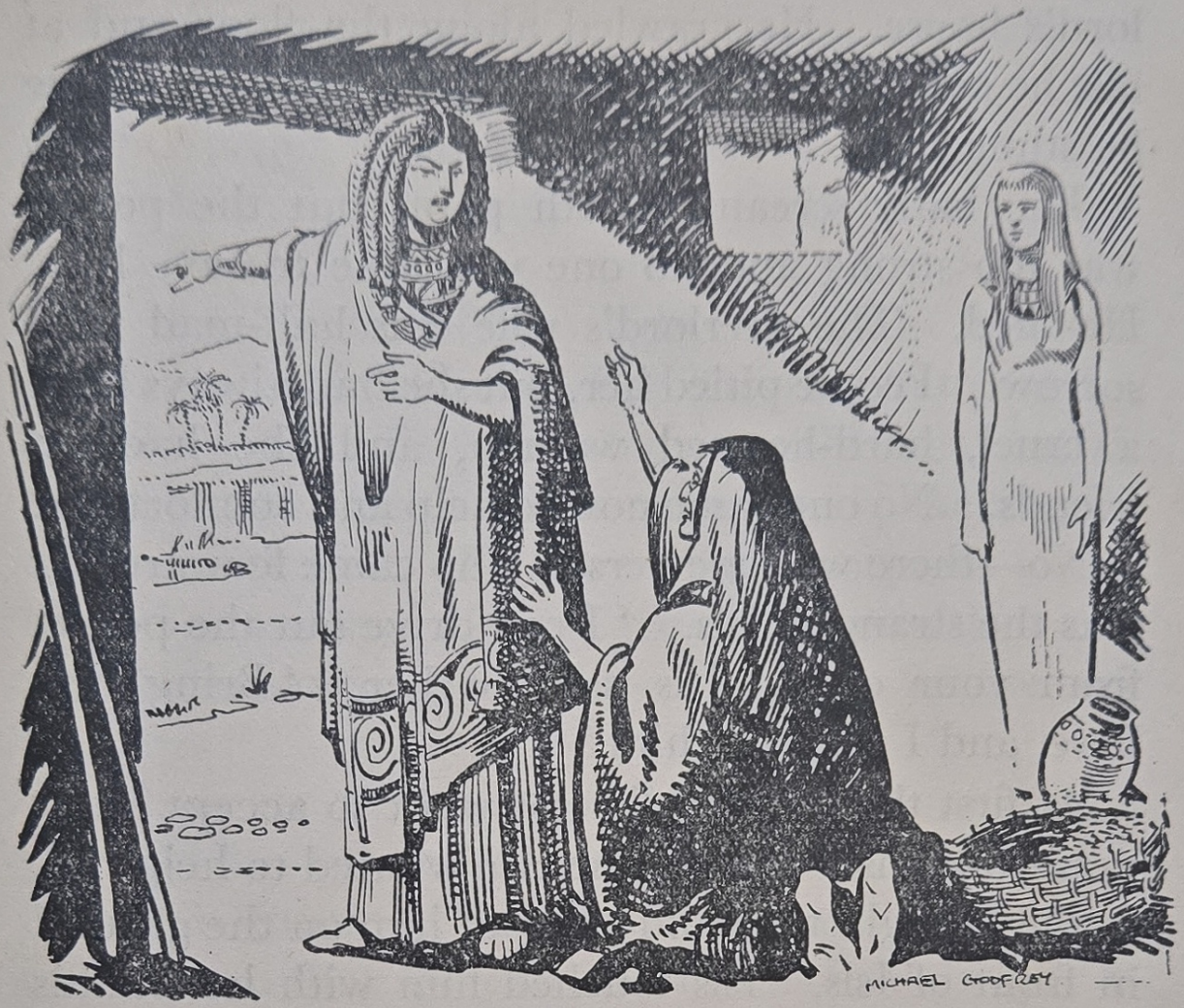
Isis and Horus went away, and sat wearily under a tree outside the city. Soon a poor working-woman came by. 'You look tired, lady,' she said to Isis.

'I am indeed tired,' Isis answered. 'And I have nowhere to live.'

'My house is poor, and I have not much to offer,' said the old woman. 'But come with me. I will carry the boy.' She led the way to her hut, made of mud and branches. She gave Isis a bowl of milk, and some bread and fruit. Horus was asleep, and she made a bed of straw for him in a corner of the room.

The overlord's wife was very angry when she heard that Isis was living with the old working-woman. She went down to the hut and shouted at the woman. 'Leave this house at once!' she said. 'If you are still here tomorrow, I will send my servants to whip you.'

When she had gone, the old woman burst into



The overlord's wife was very angry.

tears. 'Everything I love is in this house,' she cried, 'and now I must leave it. Ah, she is a cruel woman!'

'Do not weep,' Isis said. 'I can help you, and you shall not leave your home.'

But the scorpions had already decided to punish the overlord's wife. They all came to Tefen, and gave him the poison out of their tails. He now had the poison of seven scorpions in his tail, and he crawled under the door of the over-

lord's house. He crawled along the floor and at last he came to the baby son of the house. At once he stung him.

The baby screamed with pain, but the poison was too strong and no one was able to save him. He died. The overlord's wife was half-mad with sorrow. People pitied her, but she had always been a cruel, hard-hearted woman, and she had no friends. No one came now to help and comfort her.

No—there was one person who came forward. It was the stranger, Isis. 'I can drive out the poison from your child,' Isis said to her. 'Bring him here, and I will cure him.'

At first the woman did not want to accept kindness from Isis. But no one else wanted to help her, so she brought the child and put him on the ground in front of Isis. Isis touched him with her hands and cried, 'O poison of Tefen, come out! O poison of Befen, come out! I am Isis, the goddess, and my words are mighty. All stinging creatures, listen to me, and fall down on the ground. O poison of Mestet, and Mestetef, go away! O poison of Petet, Thetet and Maatet, come out!' Then she spoke some magic words which she had learned from Thoth.

It grew dark. The evening breeze stirred the trees—then all was still. Isis stretched out her arms and cried, 'The child lives, and the poison dies. The sun lives and all evil dies!'

The anxious mother looked down. Wonder of wonders! The child was breathing gently. He was no longer dead, but sleeping.

'Take him,' Isis said, and went back to the old woman's hut.

In the middle of the night there was a knock on the door of the hut. The old woman opened it and the overlord's wife came in. She went to Isis and sat at her feet. 'This morning I spoke angrily to you,' she said. 'I feared your scorpions and I turned you away. Now I have been punished and you have saved my child. Will you forgive my rudeness?'

'There is nothing to forgive,' Isis answered gently. 'But try to be more thoughtful and kind to others in future. You can begin now. Tell this old woman that she can stay in this hut always. It will make her very happy.'

'Very well,' said the overlord's wife. 'This house shall be hers for ever.'

She returned to her own house, and the old woman knelt down and thanked the lady Isis for all her goodness.

OSIRIS LIVES AGAIN

Soon the time came when Isis must begin her search for the body of Osiris, but she wanted first to find some safe place to leave her son. Typhon

might find him if she left him at Teb. So she went to her sister Nephthys, and asked her advice.

'Take him to Ahura on the magic island,' Nephthys said. 'He will be safe there. If Typhon's men find the island, Ahura will quickly float it away to another place.'

The next morning the two goddess sisters sailed down the river with Horus. At last they came to Busiris, and saw the magic island in the middle of the river. Nephthys called across the water. 'Ahura! Ahura!'

'Who is calling Ahura?' cried a woman, coming to the shore of the island.

'Someone who is born of heaven and earth, and whom you know well,' replied Nephthys. 'Come quickly.'

Soon the island floated across the water and came to the river bank where they were standing. A woman stood on the shore of the island. She was very old, but her face was happy and smiling. She knelt down and worshipped the two goddesses, and then Isis spoke to her. 'Ahura, I am going on a long journey,' she said. 'Will you take care of my son until I return? Guard him well, and keep him safe from harm.'

'I will take great care of him, lady,' said Ahura. 'No harm can touch him here.'

With tears in her eyes Isis said goodbye to her little son, and promised to return as soon as she

They stood and watched the island as it floated slowly away.

had found his father. She and Nephthys stood and watched the island as it floated slowly to the middle of the river. Then Isis turned away to begin her second search.

First she made a boat of reeds and papyrus. The Egyptians believe to this day that a boat made of papyrus is safe from crocodiles, because papyrus is holy from the touch of the goddess. Isis and Nephthys and Nephthys's son, Anubis, sailed down the river together.

The first search had been difficult, but this was ten times as hard. Typhon had cut Osiris's body into fourteen pieces, and had buried each piece

in a different part of Egypt. Sometimes Isis wondered if she would ever find them all. In every town she asked the people for any news to help her. If she found a limb, she wrapped it carefully in linen cloth and placed it in the boat. And she built a beautiful temple at the spot where she had found it. Often she wandered for long months and found nothing, and her heart was heavy with sadness.

One evening the boat arrived at a large town called Abydos. The sun was setting behind the town, and two long fingers of sunlight stretched across the sandy bank to the river. Suddenly Isis stood up in the boat and looked at the sunlight on the sand. There seemed to be a ball of living fire on the beach. Isis jumped out of the boat and ran towards it. The sun had set now, and darkness spread over the land, but the wonderful ball of fire shone brightly still. Isis dug her hands into the sand beneath the fiery ball, and found the head of Osiris.

In her gratitude, Isis built a wonderful temple at Abydos. The temple became famous through all Egypt. On the tower of the temple was a golden statue of Osiris, and each morning and evening it glistened in the rays of the rising and setting sun.

The finding of Osiris's head filled Isis with faith and joy. She continued her search with cheerful-

ness, until at last all the separate limbs were found. Isis sailed down to the sea, and here she placed the fourteen pieces of her husband's body on the sand. Nephthys and Anubis left her all alone. Kneeling on the sand, she repeated, over and over again, some magical words that Thoth had taught her. Once again darkness, black darkness, covered the world. Then the sun's rays came slowly over the horizon to show two figures sleeping on the sand.

Osiris was again made whole.

THE TEACHING OF HORUS

MANY years passed by. The little boy who had been left on the floating island grew up to be a brave and handsome young man. Osiris taught him all he knew, and the gentle Isis watched the two of them with smiling gladness.

At last the time came for Horus to learn the truth about his father. Osiris told him the story of his life in Thebes. He described his work among the poor people, and told how he and Isis had finally been made king and queen of Egypt. Then he told Horus about the wicked Typhon, and how the Evil One had murdered Osiris in order to make himself king. Osiris described the wanderings and sufferings of Isis, and told of her first success and his second murder.

Horus trembled with anger, and his eyes were bright with hatred of Typhon. 'What can I do to avenge you?' he asked.

'The time for revenge has come at last, my son,' Osiris said. 'The gods call me home—I can no longer stay with you. But I will watch over you from my new home. You will have much bitter fighting, but you will be fighting for Truth and Right. I am sure you will win.'

Osiris put his hands on his son's shoulders and looked into his eyes. Then Horus knelt down and kissed his father's hand. 'I shall win, father!' he said.

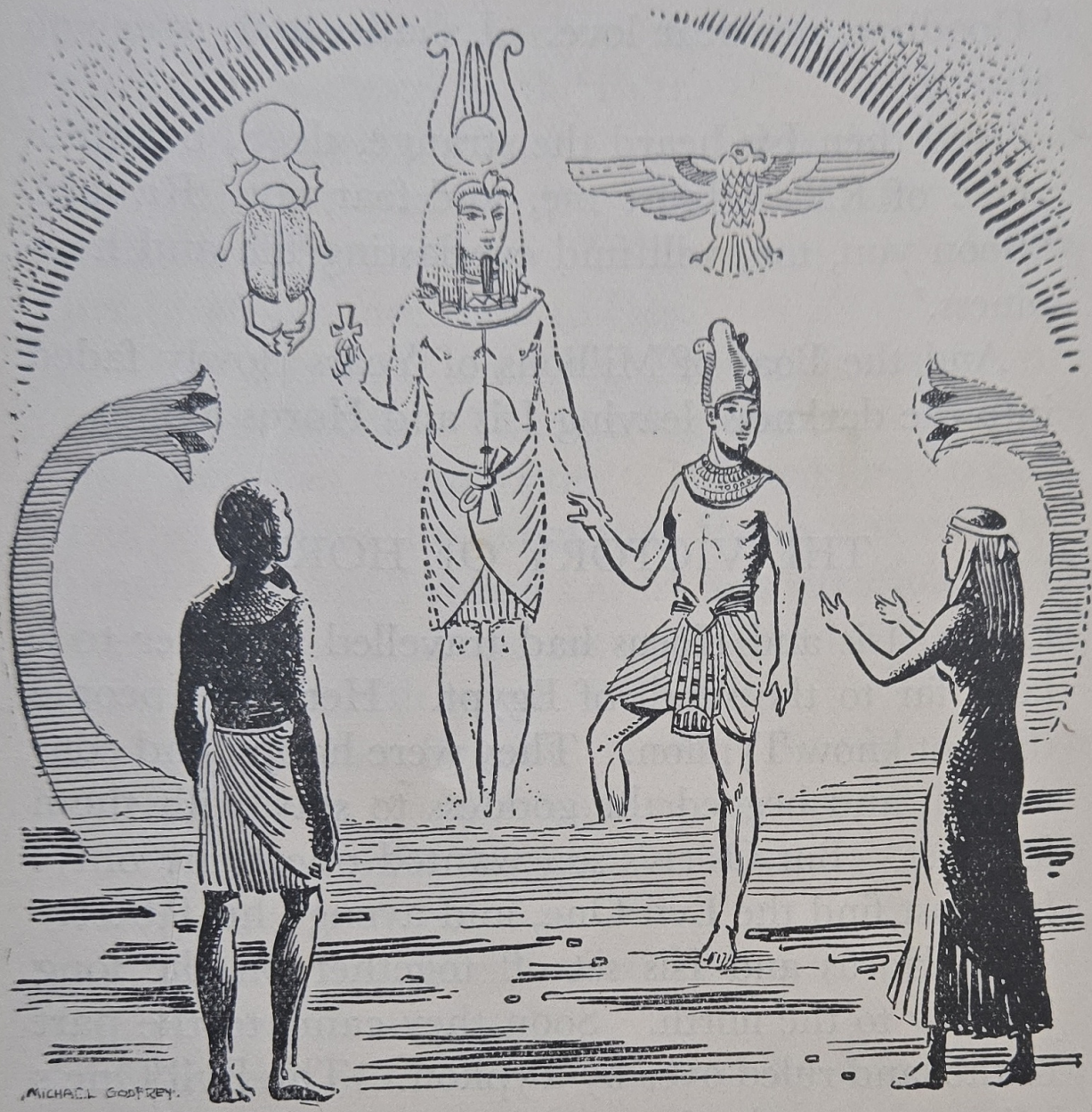
And so Osiris said goodbye to his wife and child.

'The time has come for me to go,' he said sadly. 'I wish I could stay on earth with you, but the sun-god waits for me.' He turned to Horus. 'You have work to do,' he said, 'and for this, my son, I give you all godly power. You shall be called "son of Ra", and Ra will protect you always.'

'Can I not come with you?' Isis begged him. 'Have I not suffered enough, dear husband? It is hard to lose you again.'

'It is only for a short time,' Osiris answered gently. 'There is still work for you to do here. But soon I shall return for you, and then there will be no more partings, no more tears.'

'I shall be ready and waiting,' said Isis in a low voice, and they turned together to face the west.



A figure stood up and helped Osiris into the boat.
It was the sun-god, Ra.

It was almost sunset. The sun was like a great red boat on the horizon: the Boat of Millions of Years, the Egyptians called it. Osiris walked towards it, and a figure stood up and helped him into the boat. It was the sun-god, Ra.

Osiris held out his hand towards Isis and said,

'Goodbye, my dear love. I shall watch over you always.'

And then Isis heard the strange, deep, beautiful voice of Ra. 'Trust me, and fear not,' Ra said. 'Soon you, too, will find everlasting life and happiness.'

And the Boat of Millions of Years slowly faded into the darkness, leaving Isis and Horus alone.

THE VICTORY OF HORUS

Osiris, Isis and Horus had travelled together to a land far to the south of Egypt. Here the people did not know Typhon. They were happy and contented, and begged the goddess to stay with them for ever. But Osiris's son wanted one thing only: he must find the Evil One, and avenge his father.

So Horus and Isis set off together on the long journey to the north. Soon they came to the part of the land ruled over by Typhon. The Evil One's spies were everywhere, and soon an enemy army came to capture Horus. Horus remembered the magic powers given him by Osiris and he called on Ra for help. Ra heard his cry, and sent a great army of men to support him.

There followed a long chase. Typhon's army ran away, ever further and further north, towards the city of Thebes where Typhon waited for his enemy. Horus and his soldiers followed

swiftly until they reached the walls of Thebes. Here they camped by the river.

Horus waited patiently. He knew the time had come for his final battle. The Evil One would lead his army out from Thebes, and he and Horus would at last meet face to face.

Early the next morning Typhon led a mighty army into battle. The fighting was fierce and terrible between the two sides. It lasted for two days, and sometimes it seemed that Horus was winning, sometimes that Typhon's army was victorious. The third day dawned, and the sun seemed to stand still on the horizon to watch the battle.

All day the fighting lasted. Slowly the sun moved across the sky until at last evening came; and in the bright moment of sunset, Typhon and Horus at last met face to face.

'At last, murderer!' cried Horus. 'The day of my revenge has come.'

'Ah, son of my hate!' shouted Typhon. 'Now I will kill you, and destroy everything belonging to Osiris.'

Their spears met, and they fought with fierce bitterness. Gradually the two armies drew aside and stopped their fighting. They stood in silence, watching the terrible battle between their leaders. First Horus fell, but he was up again in a moment. Then Typhon was wounded in his right hand, but he changed his spear and continued fighting with

They fought with fierce bitterness.

his left. Both men fought bravely, but Horus was young and quick and at last Typhon showed signs of tiredness. Just as the sun was setting, Horus threw his spear. Typhon did not move quickly enough, and the spear went deep into his throat. With a great cry the Evil One fell to the ground and lay still. Horus stepped forward and looked into his face: Typhon's lips were unmoving, his eyes stiff and staring.

The Evil One was dead. He would trouble the land of Egypt no more.

And now at last Horus's work on earth was finished. He and his gentle mother were free to join Osiris in the land of the immortals. The Boat of Millions of Years stood low on the western horizon. A long finger of light stretched across the battlefield until it touched Horus on the shoulder. He turned to look towards the west, and he found his goddess-mother standing beside him. He took her hand in his, and slowly they walked to the Boat of Millions of Years.

The watching soldiers fell on their knees and worshipped, as Ra held out his golden hand and helped the two figures into the boat.

Slowly the sun set, and the darkness of peace and understanding covered the land.

QUESTIONS

THE BIRTH OF OSIRIS

1. What did Pamyles hear as he walked down the road to the river? Why was he afraid?

2. Explain how the news of the birth of Osiris came to the world.

THE COMING OF THE GOD AND GODDESS TO THEBES

1. Where did Osiris and Isis go to live in Thebes?

2. What did Osiris teach the poor people, and how did Isis help them?

3. Describe the scene in which Osiris saved Hotep.

THE COMING OF THE EVIL BROTHER

1. Who became king and queen of Egypt when the old king died?

2. Who was Typhon? Why was there no more peace and happiness in Thebes after he came?

THE MURDER OF OSIRIS

1. What gift did Typhon bring to Osiris, and why did he want to measure him?

2. Describe the strange way in which Typhon measured his brother. Where did he go after he had taken the measurements?

3. Why did Isis not want Osiris to go to Typhon's house?

4. Describe Typhon's box. To whom did he promise to give it?

5. What happened when Osiris got into the box? Why did Osiris not return to Isis?

THE SEARCH OF ISIS

1. What did Typhon promise Isis if she would marry him? What was her reply?

2. What did Isis do when Typhon entered the palace? Where did she go?

THE SATYRS

1. What is a satyr? What news did Isis learn from the satyrs?

2. What did the little boy tell her, and what did she promise him?

THE GOAT-GOD PAN

1. Who was Pan?

2. Describe in your own words what happened to the box after it was carried far across the sea.

3. What gift did Pan ask from Isis, and what did she promise him?

THE SECRET OF THE TREE

1. Who was Melita? What answers did Isis give to her, when she asked, 'Who are you?' and 'Do you live here?'

2. Describe the wooden pillar in the throne-room.

3. Why was Isis made the night-nurse of the little prince? Why were the day-nurses jealous? What tales did they tell to the queen?

4. What did Astarte see from her hiding place in the night-nursery? Why was the magic spell broken?

THE RESCUE OF THE BOX

1. What did Isis ask for before she left Byblos? Did King Melecander give it to her?

2. Describe how Isis's search for Osiris ended.

THE AWAKENING OF OSIRIS

Describe in your own words how Isis brought Osiris back from the land of the dead.

THE SECOND MURDER OF OSIRIS

1. Describe the life of Osiris and Isis during the next few years.

2. When Osiris did not return from hunting, who visited Isis? What had he done to Osiris?

THE ESCAPE OF ISIS

1. Where did Typhon take Isis and Horus? How did Isis describe the castle?

2. Who visited Isis there? How did he save her and Horus?

3. Describe the seven scorpions and how they rescued Isis and Horus.

THE UNKINDNESS OF THE OVERLORD'S WIFE

1. What did the overlord's wife say to Isis when she called at her house? Where did Isis go to live in Teb?

2. How did the overlord's wife punish the poor old woman? And how did the scorpions punish the overlord's wife?

3. Describe how Isis cured the overlord's son.

OSIRIS LIVES AGAIN

1. Where did Isis take Horus? Why did she know he would be safe there?

2. Describe the finding of Osiris's head.

3. Did Isis succeed in finding all the parts of her husband's body? How many pieces were there? How did Isis make Osiris whole again?

THE TEACHING OF HORUS

1. What name did Osiris give to Horus, and what power did he give him?

2. Describe how Osiris left this world for the world of the immortals.

THE VICTORY OF HORUS

1. Why did Horus and Isis travel north after Osiris left them?

2. How did Horus get an army to help him?

3. Describe the battle ouside Thebes, and the final fight between Horus and the Evil One.

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